



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mo Te Taiao*

The background of the poster is filled with numerous green footprints of varying sizes, arranged in a way that suggests a path or journey. A central light green square contains the main title.

# 25

**easy steps  
towards  
sustainability**

**EVERY STEP  
MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

# Every step makes a difference...



# ...and you'll find 25 of them in this booklet!

Together we can really help the environment – the more of us that step up, the bigger the difference we'll all make.

One positive change we can make is to reduce the amount of paper we consume. That's why we've created an electronic version of this booklet that you can read onscreen. It also makes it easy for you to forward on to friends, family and colleagues.

Enjoy the booklet, enjoy taking the steps and please visit the [sustainability.govt.nz](http://sustainability.govt.nz) website for more information or to send us feedback. We're always updating the site with new ideas, and we would love to hear how you've incorporated some of the steps into your life.

EVERY STEP  
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Up to two-thirds of household rubbish can be reduced, reused or recycled. Reducing rubbish lowers carbon emissions, saves energy and resources, and cuts your rubbish disposal costs.

## 1 Reduce

Take control of your rubbish from the start. Reduce the amount of rubbish your household generates by buying concentrates and refills, or buying in bulk — these give you more product for less packaging, and less packaging means less rubbish. You can also reduce your rubbish by using reusable shopping bags, a lunchbox and a reusable coffee cup instead of takeaway packaging, and by placing a 'no junk mail' sign on your letterbox.

## 2 Reuse

Your trash could be someone else's treasure. Give away or sell your unwanted items and reduce the rubbish that goes to landfill.

Be creative and think about what you can reuse in your home — envelopes, containers, plastic bags — the list goes on.

## 3 Recycle

Each month, New Zealanders dispose of enough rubbish to fill a rugby field 30 stories high. A lot of this could be recycled instead of going to landfill.

Most councils now offer kerbside collection, or you could drop it off at your nearest transfer station. Look out for recycling bins when you're out and about, or take your rubbish home to recycle. Check with your council for local recycling details.

## 4 Compost or use a worm farm

Almost half of the average rubbish bag could be composted. Composting food and garden waste saves space at your local landfill, and using fewer rubbish bags can also save you money. A good way to reuse your food waste is to compost it or use a worm farm; both are great for the garden.

## 5 Buy pre-loved, or recycled products

Buying products that are recycled, have recycled content, or are second-hand can help to reduce the volume of waste that goes to landfill.

## Six months' rubbish – in one bag!



Ralph and Ali Hogan decided to cut down the rubbish they sent to landfill. Six months later, they still hadn't filled a single council rubbish bag.

Ralph (pictured) said they virtually eliminated their landfill rubbish through careful shopping and lots of recycling and composting.

So how did they do it? 'It all starts at the grocery store,' said Ralph. 'We try to choose items that come in paper, glass, tin, or number 1 or 2 plastic.'

'We buy products in bulk when possible to avoid temporary packaging. Whenever we do

not find a product in a recyclable container, we ask customer service for assistance. Sometimes we just go without.'

'Non-recyclable plastic containers are used for refrigerator storage or organising bins,' Ralph said. They shop with reusable grocery bags — 'If we find ourselves buying something when we don't have our bags, we decline plastic bags if we can manage to get our purchases without.'

Each week Ralph and Ali collect 10 litres of vegetable scraps in their compost pail, which they deposit along with grass clippings at a community garden compost pile in Porirua.

'Done properly, there is not a problem with smell or critters. Layering is the key... turn from time to time for air. It is an aerobic process.'

'As difficult as it is, we try not to buy rubbish. If it costs twice as much but lasts 10 times longer, we come out way ahead and so does the environment,' said Ralph.

Learn more at [www.sustainability.govt.nz/rubbish](http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/rubbish) and create your 'next step' plan.

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We all enjoy and rely on easy access to clean and fresh water. However, sometimes we can take our water for granted.

## 6 Fix water leaks

A leaky tap or toilet cistern that drips every second can waste up to 10,000 litres of water a year. To save water, fix leaky taps and toilet cisterns in your home.

## 7 Use dishwashers and washing machines on full loads

A full load uses less water and energy per kilogram than a partial one. Try to only use these appliances when they're full to save overall water use.

## 8 Use water wisely in your home

Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth and put a plug in the sink to save water while you shave or wash. Keeping track of your shower time can make a big difference to your household water use. A shower timer can help with this.

## 9 Save water in the garden

Make your garden more water efficient by putting in plants that are suitable to local conditions, such as natives.

Use mulch around your plants to retain moisture and less watering will be needed.

Capture rainwater in a rain barrel for use in the garden and for washing cars. A rain barrel can reduce your demand for town supply water by up to 20 per cent.

## 10 Choose water efficient products

Choose water efficient products, such as washing machines, dishwashers, shower heads, toilets and taps to save water in your home. A low-flow shower head can reduce water flow by nearly half while still producing the same pressure. Look out for the water efficiency labels on products.

More efficient hot water use can also save you money on your power bill.

## Keryn kicks the water waste habit



Thanks to a Sustainable Living course, busy mother-of-three Keryn Duff now understands the easy steps she can take to use water well.

'For example, I now know that my old washing machine uses more than 150 litres per load, whereas some new machines only use about 60,' she said. 'I am looking at replacing mine this year and have already started investigating different brands.'

'I'm always telling the kids to "turn that tap off!" when they're cleaning their

teeth or washing their hands. I am careful about filling up the kettle only as much as I need, which saves power too.'

Keryn's one-term evening course in Havelock North was coordinated by Sustainable Living New Zealand, with support from the Ministry for the Environment. The courses are run in 20 other centres – they cover water use, energy efficiency, waste reduction, shopping tips, travel, vegetable gardening and eco-building.

Keryn has introduced shorter showers for the family. She collects cold water from the shower in a bucket, before it runs hot, for later re-use in the garden – nearly a full bucket each time.

'We also wash the car on the grass instead of the driveway, with a bucket and sponge instead of a hose. For the future I am looking at recycling systems for grey water, and also at getting a tank installed to collect rainwater off our new shed roof.'

Course details are available at [www.sustainableliving.org.nz](http://www.sustainableliving.org.nz)

Learn more at [www.sustainability.govt.nz/water](http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/water) and create your 'next step' plan.

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There are many things you can do to make your home healthier while using less energy. Some are free, others require some up-front investment, most will help you save money in the long-run and all will help you do your bit for the environment.

## 11 Turn it off!

Turn appliances off at the wall and switch off lights when leaving the room. Even when on standby, appliances use a surprising amount of energy. You can save up to \$75 a year by switching appliances off at the wall when not in use.

## 12 Use hot water wisely

Around thirty per cent of the average home's power bill goes towards heating water, so it's important to make sure your system is efficient.

Check the insulation around your hot water cylinder — if it's warm to touch, it's losing heat. Also check the pipes around the cylinder for leaks.

Consider installing a solar water heating system or a heat pump water heater and you could save money on your power bills.

## 13 Monitor your power use

Find out where your household uses the most power. Invest in a power monitor or get an energy audit for your home. You'll be surprised how easy it is to make savings on your power bill.

## 14 Choose energy efficient products

Save power by using energy efficient products, such as eco-bulbs. These use only one-fifth the power of a regular light bulb for the same light output, and they last longer.

Look out for appliances with the Energy Star label — any appliance with this label is the best in its class — or refer to the appliance's star rating.

## 15 Draught-proof your home

Make your home easier to heat and keep the heat in by using well-lined curtains, draught stoppers for your doors and windows, and insulation.

## Painless power saving

Grahame Peck's new centameter 'makes it easier to be careful' — and to save big money on power bills.

Grahame (pictured) won his centameter in January through a competition on the sustainability.govt.nz website. Since then, his power bill has fallen by more than \$50 a month, from \$228 to \$176.

'That's much more than I was expecting. I would have been happy with 10 per cent,' said Grahame. 'The best thing about the centameter is the instant feedback covering the house — it's far easier than checking each room for left-on appliances.'

The unit shows how much power the house is consuming at that point in time, he said.

'It is very responsive — turn on the jug and it shows in around five seconds. Read-out is provided in money, power or CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.'

When he got the unit, Grahame set about establishing how much different items cost to run and finding the lowest-level baseline for the house — in his case, around nine cents an hour.

'Once I know this, the centameter instantly shows how many extra things are running, so I can go and find the culprit.'

What made the most difference to his power use?

'Switching off kids' TVs and computers,' Grahame said.

'I have a large house with lots of kids, so consumption is often raised by kids just leaving stuff on.'

Learn more at [www.sustainability.govt.nz/energy](http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/energy) and create your 'next step' plan.



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Whether you are building or renovating, buying or renting, there are many things you can do to make your home healthier, more comfortable and save you money, while benefiting the environment.

## 16 Insulation

A well insulated home is easier to heat and can save hundreds of dollars per year on power. Ceiling insulation can save you up to \$400 per year and cut heat losses by 35 per cent. Underfloor insulation can save up to \$300 per year and cut heat losses by another 14 per cent.

## 17 Design for the sun

Treat the sun as free heat for your home when you draw up building or renovating designs. Use materials that retain heat naturally and save money on heating.

## 18 Reuse and recycle materials

Reuse and recycle your building and renovating materials to prevent construction waste going to landfill. It's estimated that up to half of the waste that goes into New Zealand landfills comes from construction and demolition.

## 19 Use durable, non-toxic, efficient materials

The best building and renovating materials are durable, non-toxic, sourced sustainably, recyclable, and energy and water efficient. Look for the Environmental Choice tick and the Energy Star label.

## 20 Build for the future

When designing and building a new home think about its life cycle and whether it will meet your future needs. There may be higher up-front costs to build for the future, but it will pay off in the long run.

## Natalie and Paul's incredible insulation



Natalie and Paul's 1970s brick home in chilly Central Otago has become much warmer and more comfortable since they installed ceiling and floor insulation.

Natalie said that when they moved in the floor was too cold to put their one year-old son Nathan on. 'We couldn't put him on the floor, as the cold air from the garage underneath made the floor cool in summer and freezing in winter, so we had to have something done quickly – which was when we discovered the insulation scheme.'

Through an ENERGYWISE™ Home Grant, they fitted the house with blanket glass-fibre ceiling insulation, perforated reflective foil underfloor insulation, two door draught excluders, and four compact fluorescent light bulbs.

'It has made a huge difference... even when we have snow the house is cosy. Lots of people have noticed a difference and have asked me about it. They actually come in and say "Gosh, it's hot in here!" It hasn't got a chill like it used to have.'

Natalie and Paul have a wood burner, and they installed a heat transfer unit to vent heat from the lounge to outside the bedroom doors, warming up the bedrooms. The insulation has also reduced their weeping windows, which 'used to pour with water'.

'It has been a huge comfort for our growing family, now with a new healthy baby girl and going into another winter,' Natalie said.

Learn more at [www.sustainability.govt.nz/building](http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/building) and create your 'next step' plan.

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Transport makes up a large part of the average household budget — about 14 per cent or \$136 a week. There are some easy ways that you can save fuel and money while helping the environment.

## 21 Saving fuel is easy

The condition of your car, and your driving style, can increase your car's fuel consumption by up to 50 per cent. Keep your car well serviced and your tyres pumped, or you'll be using up to 10 per cent more fuel. Extra weight such as a bike rack can add a further 10 per cent, air conditioning a further 5 per cent and your driving style can add another 25 per cent.

## 22 Walk or cycle instead of driving

Car engines use 20 per cent more fuel when cold. One-third of all car trips cover less than two kilometres – not long enough for the engine to warm up – and two-thirds are shorter than six kilometres. Consider cutting down on those short trips by combining them into one big trip or walking or cycling when you can.

## 23 Car pool

Sharing car trips saves money on fuel, lessens wear and tear by using your car less and can be a social event. Ask if your neighbours or workmates travel the same way as you, and organise to car pool.

## 24 Take public transport when you can

Using public transport saves you money on petrol and reduces your carbon dioxide emissions; it can also be more relaxing than driving. Your regional council can provide information on routes, timetables and fares.

## 25 Choose a more efficient vehicle

When looking for a car, compare the environmental and fuel performance of vehicles at [www.rightcar.govt.nz](http://www.rightcar.govt.nz). A more efficient car can save you money and reduce carbon emissions. When purchasing a car think about your usual driving habits, and look for the vehicle's fuel economy label to guide your decision.

## Megan and Suzanne – car pool partners

### Megan:

'I wanted to reduce my environmental footprint from the travel I do between Te Aroha and Hamilton, so I went to the supermarket to put up an ad for a rideshare partner. There was already an ad posted by Suzanne. We really are a match made in heaven because we like to discuss and debate things. The 45 minutes to and from Hamilton whizzes by as we catch up on the woes of the world and debrief about the day. Another bonus is that we work fairly close to one another in the CBD. I remember being exhausted when I was driving alone. Suzanne and I rideshare Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and take turn about taking our cars – so we both share the driving, and the vehicle wear and tear.'



### Suzanne:

'Car pooling means that for some days of the week I can chat about every topic under the sun, find out about another person's job and have a laugh. After petrol prices went up, I appreciated the advantages to my bank balance even more. Initially I wondered how the arrangement would work as I enjoy time to myself and singing along to the radio. It has evolved into an ideal arrangement for me. That means the flexibility of a certain number of days car pooling, not having to drive every day and also having some time on my own. Communication and flexibility have helped us to find a car pooling arrangement that works.'

Learn more at [www.sustainability.govt.nz/transport](http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/transport) and create your 'next step' plan.

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**Find out more**

Contact us for more information on sustainability in the home

Email: [info@sustainability.govt.nz](mailto:info@sustainability.govt.nz)

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